

*PROGRESS Act initiates a robust national program - akin to the Manhattan Project on energy independence*

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(Washington, D.C.) - Yesterday, Majority Leader Hoyer introduced the PROGRESS Act, or the Program for Real Energy Security Act. Congressman Sires joined the Majority Leader in calling for serious action to end the nation's dependence on oil.

The PROGRESS Act would:

Establish a bipartisan National Energy Security Commission, bringing together government, industry and academic leaders to develop consensus on national goals on energy - which Congress must act upon under expedited rules.

Second, it would establish a New Manhattan Center for High Efficiency Vehicles, seeking to double the average vehicle efficiency and to diversify fuel types.

Third, this bill would establish a National Biofuels Infrastructure Development Program, providing grants to encourage the private sector to invest in wholesale and retail biofuel pumps, tanks and related distribution equipment.

Fourth, it calls for a stimulus package to upgrade the "pipeline" for biofuels - the freight rail system - while also providing grants to promote conservation alternatives such as public transit and commuter rail.

And fifth, this bill would increase the use of alternative fuels in federal fleets. The federal government is one of the leading owners of vehicle fleets and consumers of petroleum products, and it must lead by example.

Congressman Sires appeared with five other Democrats at yesterday's press conference.

Congressman Sires made the following statement supporting the PROGRESS Act:

"I first want to thank Majority Leader Hoyer for his leadership in this important area. And I appreciate the opportunity to talk today about our country's addiction to oil.

The PROGRESS Act does many good things, as my colleagues have discussed. But I would like to focus on the role of our partners in this effort. As a former Mayor and Assembly Speaker in New Jersey, I appreciate that this Act involves our regional, State, and local partners. It recognizes that the only way we can solve the problem of oil addiction is by working together.

Let me highlight a few points. The National Biofuels Infrastructure Development Program

established by this Act reimburses our private sector partners who invest in biofuel equipment. And the National Energy Security Commission brings together government, industry, and academic leaders to develop national goals and recommendations that respect regional energy solutions.

New Jersey, my home State, recognizes the importance of working together. The State is a member of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative designed to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from power plants. Additionally, the State utilized research in crafting its Energy Master Plan which reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by 2020.

New Jersey has shown to be a leader in this area. We need to follow their lead and work together by passing the PROGRESS Act to reduce our dependence on oil. Thank you."